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ABSTRACT

These recommendations for school boards to solve the problems of at-risk youth accompany a report that provides background on the problem, discusses policy implications, and provides examples of strategies for helping at-risk students. The following recommendations are suggested: (1) awaken communities to the danger of ignoring the needs of at-risk students; (2) forge an alliance of education, parent, community, and business leaders to assess the problem locally and gather support for programs; (3) seek the help of parents, teachers, community organizations, and social services in identifying at-risk students and coordinating programs; (4) ensure that programs are based on sound research and practices, evaluated, and documented; (5) work with community agencies, private industry, and colleges to assess the need for alternative and postsecondary education; (6) ask the local business community to identify work skills and provide job training and work experiences; (7) boost business community involvement by encouraging board membership and contributions; (8) use economic development councils and civic and community groups to make the schools' needs a planning priority; (9) define, develop, and fund local programs for at-risk youth and seek additional authority and funding from the state and Federal governments for collaborative programs involving the schools, other public agencies, and private organizations; (10) assess the impact of school reforms, state mandates, and school district policies and procedures on at-risk students; (11) seek an equitable system of funding for school districts with high concentrations of at-risk students; and (12) work with state and national school boards associations to share strategies, policies, and model programs. (FMW)

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An Equal Chance: Educating At-Risk Children to Succeed

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Recommendations for School Board Action

NSBA

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An Equal Chance:

Educating At-Risk Children to Succeed

Recommendations for School Board Action

March 1989

NSBA

LEADERSHIP FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

FOREWORD

Twenty-one million children today are considered at risk of failing in school and failing to become productive members of our society. Because of unstable family situations, poverty, unemployment, lack of positive social support systems, and a host of other factors, these children feel powerless and alienated.

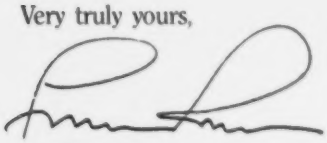
Their future is bleak: Economic hardship, for example, is almost certain in an increasingly technological economy where literacy and other basic job skills are critical. School failure, moreover, will drain the national economy in welfare and social service costs and seriously hamper the nation's ability to compete internationally.

The National School Boards Association Task Force on At-Risk Youth, a distinguished group of educators, public officials, and child advocates, as part of an NSBA presidential initiative, was assembled to examine the problem of at-risk youth and develop recommendations on how school boards should lead community efforts to help these youth. These recommendations, which accompany NSBA's new monograph, *An Equal Chance: Educating At-Risk Children to Succeed,* mark a new, more aggressive stance in NSBA's continuing efforts to help school boards develop policies and strategies which meet all children's needs.

The Task Force developed a national definition of at-risk children, as well as a dozen recommendations for school board action. These recommendations urge school boards to take the lead in creating new partnerships among the schools, the business community, parents, and community agencies and organizations which will weave a safety net of programs and services to support at-risk youth.

School boards must heed this call to action, for the sake of individual children in their schools and for the future of their communities and the nation. By marshaling their communities to help disadvantaged children, school boards will ensure that all children indeed have an equal chance.

Very truly yours,



Leonard Rovins
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INTRODUCTION

In schools across the United States, millions of children are on their way to becoming statistics, many of which symbolize the failure of our society to address problems we see manifest in classrooms every day. These children's economic, social, and family circumstances may differ; their communities may be urban, suburban, or rural; they may sit passively in class or call attention to their plight in dramatic ways. They are our nation's children and youth at risk. What they have in common is a future which offers little hope of success in school or in society.

The Scope of the Problem

An estimated 21 million U.S. children are at risk because of factors such as poverty, child abuse, homelessness, substance abuse, disability, pregnancy, limited English language skills, and low self-esteem.

As many as one-quarter of America's children live below the poverty line; some one million teenagers become pregnant each year; and more than a half million children are migrant and homeless. Such factors are linked directly to at least one million youths dropping out of school each year. For each dropout, four more students consistently rank in the lowest quartile in academic achievement.

Beyond the statistics lies the real, human picture. Historically, the public schools have been a stepping stone into the economic mainstream. But now the demands of the workplace and the information revolution require to an unprecedented extent that students develop critical thinking skills. Students who are not engaged in learning, who drop out of school, or who fail to acquire the skills they need for the work force more than likely will face economic hardship.

Concern Over the Nation's Future

Education, business, and government leaders increasingly are concerned about the threat inadequately skilled workers pose for the economic health of communities and the nation. This threat looms larger in the coming years, because changes in demographics will lead to a further increase in the proportion of at-risk children, especially poor, minority, and nonEnglish-speaking children.

The burgeoning set of problems related to at-risk youth is a festering sore in our nation. We have the balm to heal this wound: It is called community action.

School Boards: Leading Communities to Action

School boards must make at-risk youth a top priority. They must take the lead in creating solutions to the problems of at-risk youth. Some school districts have already begun to address the problems of at-risk students through special programs designed to raise students' self-esteem and provide necessary academic, social, and employment skills. Every school district must do the same. But they cannot do it alone. Schools need help from parents, health and social services agencies, local and state governments, the business community, and other community organizations. Youth at risk is a community problem which requires community solutions.

Realizing the magnitude of the problem, the National School Boards Association, under an initiative launched by NSBA President Leonard Rovins, has made at-risk children and youth a focus for school board action. As part of this effort, NSBA has published a monograph entitled *An Equal Chance: Educating At-Risk Children to Succeed,* which provides background on the problem, discusses policy implications for school boards, and provides examples of strategies that are helping at-risk youth succeed.

Recommendations of the NSBA Task Force on At-Risk Youth

In addition, to garner nationwide support for school board leadership, NSBA assembled the National School Boards Association Task Force on At-Risk Youth to formulate recommendations to accompany the monograph. The Task Force determined a dozen steps that school boards should take to lead their communities toward solutions that will help form a safety net for at-risk youth.

These recommendations represent the consensus of a distinguished panel of educators, public officials, and child advocates. Its members include school board members from all regions and types of school districts in the United States, as well as representatives of the National Association of Counties, American Association of School Administrators, National Conference of State Legislatures, Council of Chief State School Officers, American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, National PTA, and National Association of State Boards of Education.

The Task Force is calling on every school board to invite its community into a new partnership: a collaboration of people, programs, and services focused on local youth who are most in need of help. In some communities, such as poor inner-city neighborhoods, a high proportion of youth may be at risk. However, this issue doesn't affect the urban centers alone. Problems that place children at risk of failing in school and in life cut across economic, racial, ethnic, gender, and geographic lines.

Creating a Local Definition

To help school boards identify youth who may be at risk of school failure, the Task Force has developed a basic definition:

> **At-risk children and youth are those who are subject to environmental, familial, or societal forces over which they have no control and which adversely affect their ability to learn in school and survive in society. As a result, they have uncertain futures as students, workers, and citizens, and ultimately are unlikely to become productive members of our society.**

Acknowledging that various definitions of at-risk youth already exist, and that local school boards and their communities might find them confusing, the Task Force agreed that a new definition was needed to make sure that all school boards share the same understanding of the problem. The Task Force believes this definition addresses in broad terms the circumstances that put children at risk and that it allows room for local adaptation to a more specific definition.

The Task Force indeed encourages school boards to use this definition, along with information contained in the second chapter of the NSBA monograph, to develop their own definition of local youth at risk. The working definition developed by a school board in a low-income, urban, minority community, for example, might include factors such as poverty, family trauma, homelessness, substance abuse, limited English proficiency, teen pregnancy, delinquency, poor academic skills, and teen unemployment. In a rural area, the board's definition might include these or other factors such as isolation, physical or emotional health problems, child abuse, family trauma, low self-esteem, and truancy. A suburban school board might include factors such as substance abuse, family trauma, poor academic skills, physical or mental health problems or disabilities, and suicide.

Short- and Long-Term Goals

School boards and their communities must respond to the needs of at-risk youth in creative ways, by developing short- and long-term goals. Studies and successful programs have shown that one key to preventing school failure is identifying problems as early as possible. Early intervention with preschool and parenting programs, for example, can get children on the right track in school. Special programs at the elementary school, middle school, and high school levels can keep children in school and engaged in learning. Encouraging dropouts to finish school, perhaps in alternative settings, can help reclaim youth who already have experienced the handicap of a lack of education. Each community should develop programs according to local needs and priorities.

The Task Force believes that, in addition to developing short- and long-term solutions for youth, school boards should examine the broader needs of the entire community. Numerous national reports have called for a restructuring of the schools. The Task Force encourages school board members, together with school administrators, school personnel, and community leaders, to consider innovative ideas that would serve the educational needs of all community members.

The Task Force hopes the recommendations and the monograph inspire school boards across the nation to provide leadership in identifying and serving America's children who are at risk. ■

Recommendations Of The NSBA Task Force On At-Risk Youth

1 School boards should awaken their communities to the needs of at-risk youth and the danger that ignoring these students poses for the civic and economic well-being of their communities, their states, and the nation.

2 School boards should forge an alliance of education, parent, community, and business leaders to gauge the extent of the at-risk problem locally and to gather support for programs to help disadvantaged youth.

3 School boards and school administrators should seek the help of parents, teachers, community organizations, and social services in identifying at-risk students and in coordinating cohesive, comprehensive programs to help them.

4 School boards should examine the policies and academic operations of their districts and make sure that school-based programs for at-risk students are anchored in sound educational research and practices and that both short- and long-term effects of programs are evaluated and documented.

5 School boards, together with community agencies, private industry, and colleges and universities, should assess the needs of the entire community for alternative and postsecondary education and training.

6 School boards should ask the local business community to identify necessary work skills and challenge local businesses to provide job training and realistic work experiences for students at risk.

7 School boards should boost local business community involvement in helping at-risk youth by encouraging board membership, as well as contributions of time, expertise, equipment, and money.

8 School boards should gain a voice on local, county, and state economic development councils and in civic and community groups, with the goal of making the schools' needs in helping at-risk students a priority in planning for the future.

9 School boards should exert their full authority to define, develop, and fund local programs for at-risk youth and should seek additional authority and funding from the state and federal governments for collaborative programs involving the schools, other public agencies, and private organizations.

10 School boards should assess the impact of general school reforms, specific state mandates, and school district policies and procedures and ensure that such measures do not increase the likelihood of failure for students at risk.

11 School boards should seek from state and federal governments an equitable system of funding for school districts with high concentrations of at-risk youth.

12 School boards should work with their state school boards associations and with the National School Boards Association to share strategies, policies, and model programs for helping at-risk youth succeed in school.

1 School boards should awaken their communities to the needs of at-risk youth and the danger that ignoring these students poses for the civic and economic well-being of their communities, their states, and the nation.

A consensus has developed among the nation's educators, social scientists, and business leaders that the repercussions of school failure and inadequate job and life skills go far beyond the considerable effect on the individual lives of youth at risk.

Board members should make their communities and the general public aware that society loses when a student drops out of school or graduates without the skills needed for jobs in an increasingly competitive world. The social and economic costs to society include increased numbers of people who are unemployed, on welfare, and at a higher risk of becoming part of the enduring underclass and of producing another generation of children without hope.

Estimates on the costs of dropping out range from $20,000 to $200,000 for individuals in lifetime earnings. For the nation, the costs of dropout run into many billions of dollars in lost tax revenues and payment for social welfare programs. Efforts to help at-risk youth have been proven cost-effective; every dollar spent on high-quality preschool programs for disadvantaged children saves society as much as $4.75 because of lower expenditures for special education, public assistance, and crime, according to a report from the U.S. House of Representatives.

Although many board members, school administrators, and other school employees are well aware of the dangers of ignoring the needs of at-risk youth, the public may not be. Board members should get the message out through public forums such as meetings of local civic and business groups, parent organizations, and churches in a way that appeals to people's enlightened self-interest about doing the right—and pragmatic—thing for individual children, their own community, and the nation. By making the community aware of the problem, school boards can begin to build a more secure future for individual students and their communities.

2 School boards should forge an alliance of education, parent, community, and business leaders to gauge the extent of the at-risk problem locally and to gather support for programs to help disadvantaged youth.

The schools can't assume total responsibility for programs to serve at-risk youth; they need the help of parent groups, health and social services agencies, community organizations, youth groups, and business, religious, and law enforcement leaders. The whole community must take responsibility for at-risk youth.

As the public institution responsible for educating the nation's youth, the schools must take the lead in bringing the community together to discuss problems and solutions. In some communities, this effort will require putting aside perhaps long-standing turf battles. In other communities, it may mean building a coalition of community leaders and activists who have never been on the same side of an issue.

The at-risk population may differ from community to community, so school boards should seek to create their own guidelines. Using the Task Force's definition, as well as local demographic information, school records, and other sources, the schools and cooperating agencies and organizations should develop a definition for high-risk students that can be used to assess the extent of the problem.

Then, the board should develop a plan for getting community support and action. *An Equal Chance* explains how the Jackson County, Tenn., community works together for at-risk youth. Local government agencies, businesses, and community service organizations support Jackson County's Fox Middle School Project to boost academic skills and provide extracurricular activities.

Such programs are proving that, by bringing diverse individuals and groups together, school boards are in a better position to help identify at-risk youth and create community-wide strategies that draw on the strengths and experiences of community agencies and organizations. It is important not to overlook established volunteer programs, such as adopt-a-school, mentoring, tutoring, and senior citizen programs, which have contributed significantly to some school districts' efforts for at-risk youth. The greater the involvement of the whole community, the more likely the programs will be successful.

3 School boards and school administrators should seek the help of parents, teachers, community organizations, and social services in identifying at-risk students and in coordinating cohesive, comprehensive programs to help them.

Some at-risk students may be receiving services from community agencies or organizations. By initiating a discussion of the needs of local youth at risk with other providers of professional and volunteer services, the school board can help the community focus on who these students are and the kinds of programs and services they may need. In many communities, a variety of services—health care, mental health counseling, arts and recreation programs, job skills training, academic tutoring—already may exist. In such communities, the school board can be the catalyst for coordinating efforts to prevent competition between agencies and the duplication of services.

Administrators and teachers in many districts have requested or are getting training to help them recognize and deal with at-risk students. In-service training for school personnel should include instruction on how to detect symptoms of problems or potential problems such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy, dropout, and suicide. Staff training also should address academic and social remediation for students who already show signs of failure. Teacher education programs should help prepare new teachers to identify and help at-risk students.

To prevent children from "falling through the cracks," school boards should create a record-keeping system, preferably included in the schools' data base, which contains comprehensive academic and personal information about individual students, their problems, and strategies that work for them. One example from *An Equal Chance:* Through its extensive data base, the Dade County schools in Miami create student-at-risk profiles for individual students in grades 3–12 who, according to a list of academic and social indicators, may be considered at risk. Each year, the district's secondary school principals are provided school profiles identifying potential dropouts who may need special services.

School boards should encourage close cooperation and communication between the school staff, the PTA, and the staffs of other community organizations and agencies. Such cooperation, follow-up services, and record-keeping will send a message to the community and to individual students at risk that the community cares about their futures.

4 School boards should examine the policies and academic operations of their districts and make sure that school-based programs for at-risk students are anchored in sound educational research and practices and that both short- and long-term effects of programs are evaluated and documented.

A growing body of research exists on the benefits of strategies for at-risk children and youth. In a chapter entitled "Research Related to Children at Risk," *An Equal Chance* reviews the results of a number of studies. One is the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, a longitudinal study in which disadvantaged students who participated in the preschool program showed significant academic and social gains and were less likely as teens to be dropouts, unemployed, pregnant, delinquent, or on welfare.

The chapter also discusses the effects of compensatory programs such as Head Start and Chapter 1 in helping young children prepare for academic schoolwork and improve basic skills. Other studies have focused on the benefits of programs which provide parenting and decision-making skills, counseling, and health and social services. Research on effective schools, on parent involvement, and on how children learn also can help provide direction for school programs.

School board members should become familiar with these bodies of research, and administrators and teachers should receive in-service training on research related to at-risk youth. The school board and administrators should examine their districts' policies and operations to make sure that programs for at-risk students are based on sound theories and effective practices. In addition, school boards should develop short- and long-term goals in serving at-risk students—for example, beginning an early education program for at-risk preschoolers, with the long-term goal of boosting academic and social preparation and achievement, improving grade promotions, and raising graduation rates.

To make sure the school district is employing effective strategies, school boards should evaluate and document all efforts for at-risk students, including the identification process and whether specific programs have any effect on academic achievement, social adjustment, grade promotion, or other indicators of school success. By evaluating and documenting helpful strategies, schools will be better able to refine at-risk strategies and win support and funding for continued efforts.

5 School boards, together with community agencies, private industry, and colleges and universities, should assess the needs of the entire community for alternative and postsecondary education and training.

Many communities have problems with high rates of school dropout, unemployment, and inadequate skills and preparation for the workplace. To respond to the needs of their at-risk population, some school districts have expanded their concepts of schooling to provide alternative school programs for adolescent parents, substance abusers, juvenile offenders, and other youth in circumstances which interfere with learning in standard school programs.

A growing number of school districts have reached out to the out-of-school population with programs to retrain workers, teach adults English and basic skills, and provide new parents with basic parenting skills. An example from *An Equal Chance:* The Student-Parent Resource Center in the Owsley County, Ky., schools doubles as a remedial education and support services center for students and an adult education center for parents. Outreach programs also can include new or improved alliances with postsecondary institutions that serve the local community.

Because of changing demographics and educational needs, school boards must consider changing the role of the schools from primarily educating students in grades K–12 to educating a much more diverse student population, in keeping with the concepts of community schools and lifelong learning. Making the schools the center of educational opportunities for all ages will encourage at-risk youth and adults who need to improve skills to seek help and, eventually, to contribute more to the community.

6 School boards should ask the local business community to identify necessary work skills and challenge local businesses to provide job training and realistic work experiences for students at risk.

Poor work skills translate into a bleak future for at-risk youth and for the nation's businesses, which face increasing competition in the world market. National business leaders and educators such as those who comprise the Committee for Economic Development have called for greater involvement by the business community in identifying skills and training and providing workplace experience.

Local businesses can help the schools prepare future workers by identifying the skills they find lacking in workers and by working with the schools to provide on-the-job and classroom training. Many programs that have been successful in keeping potential dropouts in school have as a key component the opportunity for students to earn money while learning skills that will lead to real, self-supporting jobs after graduation.

In Hartford, Conn., notes *An Equal Chance*, the BRIDGE program involving a school/business collaborative and the chamber of commerce offers eighth and ninth grade students an intensive, accelerated program of academic help, counseling, job skills, vocational training and paid internships. The district's School-to-Work program, a collaboration between the chamber and the schools, places low-achieving juniors and seniors in internships with local businesses. Students also receive career counseling, referral, and placement services. The program has helped place 425 recent graduates in the past four years.

By sharing the goals of the Committee for Economic Development, school boards can lead the way to more productive school-business partnerships and create real opportunities for youth who may see little future in staying in school.

7 School boards should boost local business community involvement in helping at-risk youth by encouraging board membership, as well as contributions of time, expertise, equipment, and money.

The Task Force enthusiastically supports the Committee for Economic Development's call for business leaders to contribute more to the schools. As noted in *An Equal Chance*, the Committee has urged the business community to take the lead in pulling the community together to provide programs, guide the use of public and private resources, and become advocates of school improvement. The Committee also has called on U.S. businesses to encourage employee participation on school boards, provide release time and flexible schedules so employees can become more involved in the schools, and encourage executives to apply their management skills to helping solve the problems of disadvantaged students.

If the perspective of local business and industry is not represented on the board, the board should establish a business advisory council to consult on school needs, including those related to at-risk youth. Businesses should be encouraged to provide paid release time for employees (especially parents) to participate in school activities and programs and to consider loaning employees with specific job skills as mentors or guest instructors for teachers and students.

School programs involving businesspeople as tutors or guest presenters have been found to benefit at-risk students by providing extra help, practical job skills, an inside look at the work world, and role models of behaviors and attitudes essential for the workplace. By appealing to the business community's concern over having a well-educated and skilled work force and by inviting them to join in efforts to help at-risk youth, the schools will send the message that they are willing to work toward common goals such as a secure economic future for the community.

8 School boards should gain a voice on local, county, and state economic development councils and in civic and community groups, with the goal of making the schools' needs in helping at-risk students a priority in planning for the future.

To get the participation and support of major stakeholders in the community's, county's, and state's future, school boards should seek to gain a voice on planning bodies which make decisions affecting schools, community development and services, and private industry. States and communities with a well-educated citizenry are better able to attract new business interests and a bigger tax base, and thus provide better services and more opportunities.

The public and private interests both are better served if school officials and economic developers keep each other informed. School boards must initiate a representative role for themselves on planning bodies which have significant influence on future opportunities for the at-risk population. By such representation, school boards also will be in a better position to convince industry leaders they have a stake in helping at-risk students succeed in school and in the work force.

9 School boards should exert their full authority to define, develop, and fund local programs for at-risk youth and should seek additional authority and funding from the state and federal governments for collaborative programs involving the schools, other public agencies, and private organizations.

An increasing number of states have passed laws on school efforts for at-risk youth. In some instances, state programs require local school districts to provide and fund at least in part local efforts such as early education for at-risk children, counseling for at-risk adolescents, and reductions in class size. *An Equal Chance* describes efforts in some of those states. Wisconsin, for example, requires every school district annually to identify at-risk students and develop plans to meet their needs. Additional funding for some school districts is tied to improvement in the performance of at-risk students. Missouri's New Parents as Teachers program is supported in part by local districts.

Such efforts generally are praised as effective, but for some districts they may prove too expensive and too prescriptive. Decreasing class size, for example, is costly, and without funds for additional classroom space, many districts either will not meet mandates or will have to use funds intended for other programs. Federal laws related to handicapped and learning disabled students, in addition, also may have prescriptions for local programs. The Task Force has expressed concern over some districts' inability to determine their own programs, to control the use of funds for at-risk programs, and to mix public and private funding for such programs.

School boards should exert their full authority to design programs and use public funds most effectively for at-risk students. If they run into difficulty, for example, applying state or federal monies to programs run jointly with community agencies or organizations, school boards should seek greater flexibility and control from the state or federal government. In addition, school boards should insist that programs that are mandated by the state or federal government be fully funded.

10 School boards should assess the impact of general school reforms, specific state mandates, and school district policies and procedures and ensure such measures do not increase the likelihood of failure for students at risk.

Many educators believe that certain school reforms, such as "no pass, no play" and increases in the required number of credits for high school graduation, without intending to, have contributed to the dropout rate. Students who already are having trouble meeting requirements or advancing in grade may be left further behind, with little hope of catching up or graduating.

In a 1988 report, *America's Shame, America's Hope,* the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation notes that former Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell said that the school reform movement was benefitting 70 percent of the nation's students; the other 30 were disadvantaged, at-risk students who weren't being educated effectively. Yet the Mott Foundation estimated that only 5 percent of state education funds are being used to help at-risk youth.

School boards should assess how school reforms and district policies are affecting students in their districts, paying special attention to students who show signs of school failure. With special programs, at-risk students can be helped to adjust successfully to more rigorous standards.

11 School boards should seek from state and federal governments an equitable system of funding for school districts with high concentrations of at-risk youth.

Even sharing the responsibility with community agencies and organizations, schools may be hard pressed to fund programs for at-risk youth. Some districts, especially those in poor urban or rural areas, may have a majority of students considered at risk of school failure. Programs that have been shown to work—school-based health clinics, counseling, academic tutoring, substance abuse programs, early education and parenting programs—can be costly, prohibitively so for districts with a low per-pupil budget.

Such districts may need additional funding for programs from state and federal governments. By seeking a more equitable way to allow school districts to help at-risk students, school boards will help their communities and the nation focus on the fact that the at-risk problem is a shared responsibility, and that neglecting youth in poor areas will have serious repercussions beyond those specific communities.

12

School boards should work with their state school boards associations and with the National School Boards Association to share strategies, policies, and model programs for helping at-risk youth succeed in school.

An Equal Chance discusses a variety of school district and state programs. Many other school districts also have programs for students at risk; such districts should be encouraged to provide their state associations and the National School Boards Association with information about programs and their results. School boards associations thus will become a repository and clearinghouse for successful practices.

About NSBA

The National School Boards Association is located in Alexandria, Virginia, within the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. NSBA is a not-for-profit organization whose primary mission is the general advancement of public education through the unique North American system of representative and participatory government, whereby elementary and secondary school policy is decided by local school board members who are directly accountable to the community. Over 95% are elected, and the remainder are appointed by elected officials.

Federation Members of NSBA are the 49 state associations of local school boards, the Hawaii State Board of Education, and the boards of education in the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

NSBA promotes the quality of public elementary and secondary schools through services to its Federation Members and local school boards; by increasing school board impact on federal education laws and regulations; and by maintaining liaison with other education organizations and governmental authorities.

In so doing, NSBA represents the interests of school boards before Congress, federal agencies and in court cases relating to education; provides education and training programs for school board members; provides school district management services; and offers to school boards a variety of other services including an annual convention and the Institute for the Transfer of Technology to Education (ITTE).

The NSBA Federal Relations Network, composed of up to three school board members in each Congressional district, plays a major role in NSBA's education advocacy program in Washington, D.C.

Three major publications are produced by NSBA: the award-winning monthly magazine, *The American School Board Journal;* the monthly magazine, *The Executive Educator,* and a fortnightly newspaper, *School Board News.*

Seven constituent groups within the Federation play a significant role in NSBA's efforts to serve Federation Member and school board needs:

- The Council of Urban Boards of Education focuses on the unique needs of urban school boards.
- The Large District Forum serves the special needs of large but non-urban school districts.
- The Rural District Forum serves rural and small enrollment districts.
- The Federation Member Executive Directors' NSBA Liaison Committee links the top executives within the Federation.
- The Council of School Attorneys focuses on issues of school law.
- The Conference of School Boards Association Communicators serves NSBA and Federation Member communications professionals.
- The Federal Policy Coordinators Network focuses on the administration of federally funded programs.

NSBA maintains close liaison with other groups, such as the National Caucus of Black School Board Members, National Caucus of Hispanic School Board Members, National Caucus of Young School Board Members, National Association of State Boards of Education, American Association of School Administrators, Forum of Education Organization Leaders (FEOL), Education Leaders Consortium (ELC), National Governors' Association, National Conference of State Legislatures, and Education Commission of the States.

Founded in 1940, NSBA represents the nation's 97,000 school board members who, in turn, represent the more than 40 million public school children in the U.S., which account for about 90% of all elementary and secondary school students in the nation. Over 1,800 local school boards are NSBA Direct Affiliates.

NSBA policy is determined by a 150-member Delegate Assembly composed of active school board members across the country. Translating this policy into action programs is a Board of Directors consisting of 21 members and three *ex-officio* members. The executive director administers NSBA programs, assisted by a professional staff.

NSBA

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